

OBSERVATIONS ON A FEW BREEDING BIRDS IN
NORTHEASTERN OHIO*

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Judging from the published records, little is known about the breeding status of certain species of birds in Ohio. For this reason it seems desirable to place on record the pertinent unpublished material of this character which has been accumulating during the past few years in the files of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

The data presented here were obtained mainly during the course of field work by the writer, often in company with Mr. Herbert W. Brandt, Mr. Omar E. Mueller, or Mr. John H. Dittrick. Some of the material is contained in the unpublished works of the writer's colleagues, Mr. Arthur B. Williams, who is conducting ecological studies in Cleveland's North Chagrin Metropolitan Reservation, and Mr. B. P. Bole, Jr., who is carrying on similar studies at Little Mountain.

To facilitate the following discussion of the distribution of the species concerned, and to aid those who may wish to use these records, the following definition of localities is included:

Bradley Pond. In Geauga County, Burton Township, 28 miles southeast of Cleveland; elevation 1100 feet.

Bratenahl. In Cuyahoga County, eastern suburb of Cleveland; elevation 600 feet.

Gates Mills. In Cuyahoga County, Mayfield Township, 14 miles east of Cleveland; elevation 1040 feet.

Kirtland Hills. In Lake County, Kirtland Township, 23 miles northeast of Cleveland; elevation 900 feet.

Little Mountain. In Lake and Geauga Counties, Concord and Chardon Townships, 26 miles northeast of Cleveland; elevation 1260 feet.

Mayfield. In Cuyahoga County, Mayfield Township, 13 miles east of Cleveland; elevation 1080 feet.

Mechanicsville. In Ashtabula County, Austinburg Township, 45 miles east of Cleveland; elevation 800 feet.

Mentor Headlands. In Lake County, Mentor Township, 28 miles northeast of Cleveland; elevation 600 feet.

*This paper was in the hands of the Editor at the time of the publication of the article "The Breeding Birds of Ashtabula County, Ohio", by Lawrence E. Hicks (WILSON BULLETIN, XLV, pp. 168-195, 1933). This fact accounts for the absence of reference to this article in the present paper and for the crediting of certain records as new for the State, which claims are nullified by Dr. Hicks' paper.

North Chagrin Reservation. In Cuyahoga County, Mayfield Township, 15 miles east of Cleveland; elevation 900 feet.

Pymatuning Swamp. In Ashtabula County, Andover Township, 60 miles east of Cleveland; elevation 1000 feet.

Richmond. In Lake County, Painesville Township, 28 miles northeast of Cleveland; elevation 600 feet.

Snow Pond. In Geauga County, Burton and Troy Townships, 28 miles southeast of Cleveland; elevation 1000 feet.

Solon Bog. In Cuyahoga, Geauga, Summit, and Portage Counties; Solon, Bainbridge, Twinsburg, and Aurora Townships; 20 miles southeast of Cleveland; elevation 1000 feet.

The following annotated list includes such species as the writer deems sufficient interest because of the scarcity of published information concerning their breeding distribution in northeastern Ohio.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER. *Sphyrapicus varius varius.* There have been a few published records for the breeding of this species in Ohio, such as those of Oberholser (1) and Baird (2). The number of these records is so limited, however, that it seems desirable to report the following specimens collected in a red maple-yellow birch swamp forest section of Pymatuning Swamp; two males and one female, June 9, 1931; one female June 22, 1931; and one male July 19, 1932. These records, of course, do not constitute a definite proof of breeding, but the presence of the several birds of both sexes in the same area and in different years is fairly strong evidence for such a case, particularly as Sutton (3) has found this species nesting in the Pennsylvania section of this great swamp.

RED-BREADED NUTHATCH. *Sitta canadensis.* It is believed that this nuthatch has never been reported as occurring in Ohio except in winter and during migration. Therefore the writer wishes to present as the first presumable breeding record for the State, the capture of a juvenal female on July 7, 1931, by John H. Dittrick, at Mentor Headlands. The bird was discovered in company with a White-breasted Nuthatch in the top of a tall tree at the edge of a small pond which forms part of a rather long, narrow wooded swamp known as Mentor Marsh. There are no hemlocks or other evergreen trees in this swamp nor anywhere else in the immediate vicinity of the place where the specimen was taken. This is interesting as it would seem likely that if the species bred in the State at all it would be in some of the hemlock ravines which most closely approximate the evergreen forests, the bird's normal breeding habitat in the north. It is quite

possible, of course, that this particular bird was raised in the splendid hemlock wood of the Chagrin or Grand River valleys seven or eight miles south of the point where it was captured.

SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN. *Cistothorus stellaris*. Because of the localized distribution of the species in Ohio, as well as elsewhere throughout its range, due to its exacting habitat requirements, it was rather pleasing to find it nesting in good numbers in scattered sedge-meadow areas about the higher land bordering Pymatuning Swamp. On June 22, 1931, three birds were flushed but none were in song. On July 23, twenty pairs were located by the songs of the males in an area approximately a mile long by a quarter of a mile wide. Three pairs were located at Bradley Pond, June 14, 1932. On July 8, 1932, a breeding colony of twelve pairs were located by the songs of the males in a rather extensive meadow of pure sedge, *Carex* sp. and seed-box, *Ludwigia alternifolia*, at Solon Bog. Frequent observations carried on the same year in another open marsh area of ten and one-half acres at Solon Bog failed to produce any signs of Short-billed Marsh Wrens until July 23, when three males appeared and began to sing in a narrow belt of sedge-meadow bordering the marsh. On August 20, a nest containing recently hatched young was found in a clump of sedge overshadowed by jewel-weed and marsh grasses. Although both areas were scoured in the summer of 1933 at the same times of year that Short-billed Marsh Wrens were heard singing in 1932, not a single individual was found.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER. *Protonotaria citrea*. Although reported as a common breeding bird at Buckeye Lake in the central part of the State by Walker, Trautman, and Thomas (4), this striking warbler is rare as a nesting species in any part of northeastern Ohio. Breeding records are reported from the vicinity of Wooster by Stevenson (5), from Huron by Morse (6), and from near Chardon by Cook (7). On June 3, 1931, a pair of Prothonotary Warblers was collected by the writer at the edge of an alder-buttonbush area in a swamp at Richmond.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER. *Dendroica magnolia*. Wheaton (8) credits this species with being "a summer resident in small numbers in northeastern Ohio", but no other mention of the breeding status of this warbler seems to have been forthcoming since that time. In view of this fact the writer wishes to place on record the capture of a specimen at Pymatuning Swamp on July 19, 1932. The bird was a male which was heard singing in the low, second growth hemlocks at the edge of the swamp.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER. *Dendroica virens virens*. Although not generally credited with being an Ohio breeding bird, this warbler is apparently the most abundant in the northeastern part of the State during the nesting season of any of the typically boreal breeding species. Even here, however, it seems to be confined in its choice of nesting habitat to the hemlock woods, being most common where the hemlock stands are most extensive. Harper and Roth (7) reported this warbler breeding in the Roosevelt Game Preserve in Seioto County, and Doolittle (9) recorded it for Lake County. The writer found a single singing male Black-throated Green Warbler in the tall hemlocks at the edge of Pymatuning Swamp on June 9, 1931. On July 12, 1931, another was seen at North Chagrin Reservation. On the same date two more were seen at Kirtland Hills. During the breeding season of 1932, Mr. A. B. Williams (10) found three pairs nesting at North Chagrin Reservation in the "Beech-Hemlock association only". On June 24, 1933, the writer found three singing males in a bog at Mechanicsville, where hemlock was very abundant. During the entire summer of 1933 Mr. B. P. Bole, Jr. had fourteen pairs of Black-throated Green Warblers under observation in the white pine-hemlock forest on top of Little Mountain.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER. *Dendroica fusca*. Similar to the preceding species in its choice of nesting habitat, the Blackburnian Warbler is apparently less common in northeastern Ohio than the Black-throated Green Warbler. On June 9, 1931, two males of this species were collected in the last remaining stand of tall hemlocks on the Ohio border of Pymatuning Swamp. On June 22, two more of these warblers were collected. One was a male and the other a female, the latter showing by the bare condition of the abdomen unmistakable signs of nesting. During the breeding season of 1933, Mr. B. P. Bole, Jr. found two pairs of Blackburnian Warblers nesting in the pine-hemlock forest of Little Mountain.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER. *Dendroica pensylvanica*. Wheaton (8) called this warbler a summer resident in the northeastern part of the State, and Oberholser (1) recorded two summer occurrences of this species near Wooster. Jones (11), however, was unable to add any further information on this matter. Since then it has been reported as breeding at Jefferson in Ashtabula County by Sim (12) and by Campbell (13) at Oak Openings in Lucas County. The writer found a single bird on July 9, 1931, at Pymatuning Swamp and another on June 22, 1931, at the same place. On June 22, 1933, two singing males were found at Solon Bog and one was collected. In every case the

birds were found in the low, second growth trees bordering the swamps.

GRINNELL'S WATER-THRUSH. *Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis*. During visits to Pymatuning Swamp on June 9 and 22, 1931, this species was much in evidence in the red-maple-yellow birch swamp forest, and on June 9, ten singing males were counted. On June 22, four males were heard and two juveniles were collected. On June 11, 1932, one singing male was heard. In 1932, three singing males were found several times during the breeding season at Bradley Pond and three more at Solon Bog. In 1933, one singing male was discovered in a swamp forest at Mechanicsville. In a twenty-three acre area of red maple-yellow birch swamp forest at Solon Bog, one pair nested in 1932 and 1933. In the latter year young birds, just out of the nest, were seen on June 4.

Three adult breeding specimens taken June 10, 1931, and two juveniles taken June 22, 1931, at Pymatuning Swamp, and one adult breeding specimen taken June 14, 1932, at Bradley Pond, were examined by Dr. Harry C. Oberholser who considered them closer to *Seiurus noveboracensis notabilis* than to the eastern race, *Seiurus noveboracensis noveboracensis*. The presence of Grinnell's Water-thrushes in northeastern Ohio as migrants has already been recorded by Oberholser (14). Of the five migrant specimens present in the Cleveland Museum's collection from Ohio, all are *notabilis*, so it seems that this must be the common migrant as well as the breeding form of this species in this State.

PURPLE FINCH. *Carpodacus purpureus purpureus*. Concerning the breeding status of the Purple Finch in Ohio, Kirtland (15) said: "Saw several at Kinsman on the last of June of the present year" (1838). Neither Wheaton (8) nor Jones (11) give any further records. Doolittle (16) found a singing male in Lake County during June and July, 1917. The finding of a nest and eggs of this species in 1925 at Gates Mills was reported by Kendeigh (17), and the "Bird Calendar" (18) for 1932 records the presence of Purple Finches at Gates Mills during the breeding season in every year since 1925. Another positive breeding record for Gates Mills is represented by a female specimen carrying a fully developed egg, taken June 26, 1933, and now in the Cleveland Museum collection. Mr. B. P. Bole, Jr. reported the presence of four Purple Finches on July 3 and July 10, 1933, at Little Mountain, but weekly observation there prior to those dates had failed to disclose the presence of this species.

EASTERN SAVANNAH SPARROW. *Passerculus sandwichensis savanna*. There has been some discussion about the distribution of breeding Savannah Sparrows in Ohio. Campbell (19) pointed out that this species seems to be increasing as a breeding bird in northern Ohio and is apparently gradually extending its range southward. He came to these conclusions from published records for the State and from his own observations in the northwestern section near Toledo. In northeastern Ohio the Savannah Sparrow apparently breeds more or less commonly wherever very extensive meadows occur. It was heard singing on the outskirts of Cleveland throughout the breeding season of 1931. It was also found to be very common in the extensive meadows bordering Pymatuning Swamp. On June 22, 1931, ten singing males were counted there and several adults and juveniles were taken on that date and on July 23. In a low sedgy meadow at Solon Bog, one specimen was collected on June 2, 1930, another was taken at Bradley Pond, June 14, 1932, and another at Mayfield, June 7, 1933, in similar habitats.

SLATE-COLORED JUNCO. *Junco hyemalis hyemalis*. Kirtland (15) in referring to the junco said: "It breeds in great numbers in the dark beech woods of the Connecticut Western Reserve." Wheaton (8) called it a "resident throughout the year in northeastern Ohio" and had a definite record of its occurrence in July in Portage County. Hicks (20) found juncos breeding in surprisingly large numbers in Wayne, Andover, Richmond, Denmark, and Monroe Townships of Ashtabula County from 1928 to 1933. The "Bird Calendar" for 1931 (21) announced the presence of five juncos on Little Mountain on August 21, 1931. To add to these published records, during the breeding season of 1933, Mr. B. P. Bole, Jr. had a pair of juncos under observation in the pine-hemlock forest on top of Little Mountain. The young were found out of the nest on June 19, 1933.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW. *Zonotrichia albicollis*. Another breeding record for this species has come to light to add to those of Jones (22) for Marblehead and Cedar Point, and those of Hicks (20) for Wayne and Andover Townships. Mr. B. P. Bole, Jr. reported the finding of adult White-throated Sparrows with young birds just out of the nest in June, 1929, among cultivated red pines and hemlocks at Bratenahl, an eastern suburb of Cleveland.

SWAMP SPARROW. *Melospiza georgiana*. It is strange that this species is not generally recognized as an Ohio breeding bird, as is evidenced by the statement of its range in the Fourth Edition of the A. O. U. Check-List, since there is no doubt about its nesting com-

monly in all favorable locations in the northeastern triangle of counties. Published records for the breeding of Swamp Sparrows in Ohio are very few. The first set of eggs was taken by Dr. Howard Jones at Circleville, twenty-five miles south of Columbus in May, 1881, and reported by Jones (11) in his catalogue of "The Birds of Ohio". The writer believes this is considerably farther south than the bird has been found breeding since. Kimes (23) reported the Swamp Sparrow as breeding near Canton, "seven or eight pairs" were found by Walker and Franks (24) breeding in a cranberry bog in southwestern Huron County, and Baird (25) reported this species as fairly common and nesting in Columbiana County east of Salem. It is interesting to note that Jones (26) did not find the Swamp Sparrow breeding in the extensive marshes of the Cedar Point region. The writer has found it definitely breeding in Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga, Portage, and Ashtabula Counties. In one twelve-acre area of cat-tail marsh at Richmond three nesting pairs were under observation during June and July, 1931. One nest containing fresh eggs was found in a cat-tail clump on June 25, 1931. At Bradley Pond and Snow Pond it was found breeding commonly in 1931. At Pymatuning Swamp during June and July, 1931, it was abundant even rivaling the Song Sparrows in numbers. In 1930 it was found breeding commonly at Solon Bog. At the same locality in a ten and one-half acre area of common rush-woolgrass marsh, ten pairs were recorded nesting in both 1932 and 1933. Nearby, in a twenty-three acre red maple-yellow birch swamp forest, five pairs were recorded in 1932 and seven in 1933.

From these data it seems evident that the northeastern corner of Ohio should be included in the regular breeding range of the Swamp Sparrow. This species apparently breeds in other parts of the State only in scattered, extremely favorable localities.

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